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### Arah Parker and others (discussing North Fontana)

Wilmer Amina Carter Foundation

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# Bridges that Carried Us Over Project

## Interview Summary

**Interviewees:**

Ellen Turner  
Fredrick Christian  
Marcille Christian  
Arah Parker

**Interviewer:**

Jennifer Tilton

**Interview Date:**

July 26, 2022

**Interview Location:**

North Fontana Concerned Citizens Committee Office

**Length:**

01:57:07

**Interview Summary completed by:**

Marissa Rodriguez, 2023.  
Caroline Blanchard, 2024.

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**Description:**

North Fontana residents, Arah Parker, Marcille Christian, Frederick Christian, and Ellen Turner, share their experiences of living in north Fontana, a historic Black community shaped by segregation in Fontana. They describe their parents' migration to the I.E. and how they were confined north of Baseline because of housing discrimination. Frederick describes the creation of the "Track," the core of North Fontana's Black community in the 50s and 60s, and the ways different housing tracks shaped which schools children attended. Ellen Turner describes how her mother, Jessie Turner, was instrumental to North Fontana through her work on the local Black newspapers, and her community activism for local infrastructure and busing. She highlights her perseverance even in the face of backlash from the KKK. They reveal glimpses of North Fontana's history, how local churches were pillars for the community, how the community organized to make voting easier, and the fate of local businesses and the recreation center after the 210 Freeway split. They contribute stories of the creation of the Black History Parade, how racial violence presented itself in the community, and the presence of gangs in North Fontana. They share their insights on how Fontana has changed—both positively and negatively.

**Subject Topic:**

- North Fontana

- Inland Empire (Calif.)
- Kaiser Steel
- War on Poverty
- Racism
- Segregation
- Businesses
- Activism
- Unions
- Elected Officials
- Migration

**Spatial Coverage:**

| Name of Site (if relevant)                                  | General Location/Address  |
|---|---|
| The Track   | (consisted of five main streets)<br>Los Cedros Avenue, Fontana (bottom)<br>Jacaranda Avenue, Fontana (middle)<br>South Highland Avenue, Fontana (top) |
| Bethel AME Church   | 16262 Baseline Ave, Fontana, CA   |
| Mr. Davis Garage where a voting precinct was established    | Oleander Ave, Fontana   |
| Ellen Turner's house  | Juniper Avenue, Fontana   |
| Feed store  | Sierra Way  |
| North Fontana Concerned Citizens Committee (In Turner Home) | Juniper Avenue, Fontana   |
| Jessie Turner Community Center                              | North of Highland Avenue, Fontana   |
| The Ferguson's Store  | Sierra Avenue, Fontana  |
| The Rankin Gas Station                                      | Baseline Avenue, Fontana  |
| Women's Club  | North Fontana   |

**Temporal Coverage:**

1940s – 1960s

**Key Events:**

- Watts Riots
- War on Poverty
- Creation of the 210 Freeway in Fontana
- Short Family Bombing

**Key Organizations:**

- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- Klu Klux Klan (KKK)
- Black Panthers
- Hells Angels
- New Hope Missionary Baptist Church
- Head Start Program
- Operation Second Chance
- Blue Blaze
- Black History Parade Committee
- Black Student Union
- Soul Club
- North Fontana Community Center
- Newspapers: The American, The Black Voice, The Precinct Reporter

**Interview Index:**

| <b>Media Format</b> | <b>Time</b>         | <b>Topic Discussed</b>  |
|---------------------|---------------------|---|
| Digital Video       | 00:00:00 – 00:01:14 | Introductions with Arah Parker, Marcille Christian, Frederick Christian, and Ellen Turner.  |
| Digital Video       | 00:01:14 – 00:06:03 | Marcille’s memories of migration to North Fontana and memories of the early North Fontana churches and community.   |
| Digital Video       | 00:06:03 – 00:07:25 | Arah’s description of the early North Fontana businesses and neighborhoods. New Hope Missionary Baptist Church- seventh and Harris Street in San Bernardino                                   |
| Digital Video       | 00:07:25 – 00:15:01 | Fred’s memories of his parents’ migration to North Fontana and the creation of the ‘tract’ in North Fontana. Everyone shares how the Fontana neighborhoods and schools were racially divided. |
| Digital Video       | 00:15:01 – 00:19:36 | Fred discusses how the Watts Riots and the local KKK chapter influenced Fontana High School race riots. He explained how the race riots were regarded by the community.                       |
| Digital Video       | 00:19:36 – 00:22:11 | Ellen’s family’s migration to North Fontana and early memories. She discusses the creation of the Fontana Messenger, her mother’s previous newspaper in Louisiana.                            |

|               |                        |   |
|---------------|------------------------|---|
| Digital Video | 00:22:11–<br>00:31:19  | Ellen's shares her mother's perseverance with the Fontana Messenger and her activism regarding advocating for sidewalks, street lights, and retaliation from the KKK. |
| Digital Video | 00:31:19 –<br>00:36:11 | Everyone shares the physical description of Fontana's previous appearance.  |
| Digital Video | 00:36:11 –<br>00:42:44 | Fred and Marcille describe the type of jobs people had on the track.  |
| Digital Video | 00:42:44 –<br>00:50:11 | Continuation of Ellen's mother's activism, community members and voting rights in Fontana.  |
| Digital Video | 00:50:11 –<br>00:57:58 | Everyone's church community/involvement   |
| Digital Video | 00:57:58 –<br>01:03:44 | The creation of the Black History Parade Committee, the importance of the parade and pageants.  |
| Digital Video | 01:03:44 –<br>01:11:50 | The creation of the North Fontana Concerned Citizens Committee, the history of the Jessie Turner Community Center and its importance.                                 |
| Digital Video | 01:11:50 –<br>01:16:36 | Everyone shares brief memories of property North of Baseline Ave and the consequence of the 210 freeway towards the community.  |
| Digital Video | 01:16:36 –<br>01:25:12 | Everyone highlights the fight for public bussing. They continue stories of Jessie's activism and Operation Second Chance.   |
| Digital Video | 01:25:12 –<br>01:29:51 | Ellen describes the creation of the Precinct Reporter, Black Voice News and the Fontana Messenger.  |
| Digital Video | 01:29:51 –<br>01:33:37 | Further continuation of stories about activism: Head Start Program, memories of the courthouse, Black Panthers.   |
| Digital Video | 01:33:37 –<br>01:39:30 | Fred's continuation of race riots and political statements. Everyone's stories of the Edgewood Lounge, Blue Blaze, and different performances.                        |
| Digital Video | 01:39:30 –<br>01:45:18 | Stories about the importance of Hells Angels and the Black Panthers in the North Fontana Community.   |

|               |                        |   |
|---------------|------------------------|---|
| Digital Video | 01:45:18 –<br>01:57:07 | Everyone’s final messages and opinions of Fontana’s positive/negative progress. |
|---------------|------------------------|---|

**Related Materials:**

Additional oral history interviews are available from the Wilmer Amina Carter Foundation’s “Bridges that Carries Us Over Project” on CSUSB ScholarWorks, <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/bridges/>.

**Full interview transcript can be found below.**

## Interview Transcript

### **Start of Interview:**

[00:00:00]

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:00:01] So we're here today doing an interview about the history of North Fontana for the Bridges that Carried Us Over Archive, and thank you so much for joining us today. The way we like to start is to have each one of you quickly just tell us your name and make sure we know how to spell your name so you can start.

**Arah Parker** [00:00:18] Sure. So my name is Arah Parker. A. R. A. H. Last name's. P. A. R. K. E. R.

**Marcille Christian** [00:00:26] Okay. I'm Marcille Christian, and M. A. R. C. I. L. L. E. and then C. H. R. I. S. T. I. A. N.

**Frederick Christian** [00:00:39] I'm Fred. Official name, Frederick. But everybody calls me Fred Christian. Last name spelled the same way. First name: F. R. E. D.

**Ellen Turner** [00:00:50] Ellen Turner.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:00:55] Fantastic. So we got a lot of people to tell us a story today. The first question I would like, especially the three of you maybe to say first, is how did your family tell us the story of how your family first moved here to North Fontana and when that was? And so you can start if you want.

**Ellen Turner** [00:01:14] We need to start with Marcille.

**Marcille Christian** [00:01:16] Yes. Oh, gosh. Yeah, thanks. Because what was that, 1940.

**Arah Parker** [00:01:26] Her parents, my grandparents, married in November of 1948 and both my grandparents, her parents are from Texas. My grandfather, he discharged from World War Two.

**Arah Parker** [00:01:37] 1945, '46?

**Marcille Christian** [00:01:39] Yes.

**Arah Parker** [00:01:39] And his discharge from outside of Chicago. He then migrated to L.A. So he lived with his brother, my great uncle. He lived in Watts for about a year. And then he moved out here to Fontana between 47 and around, 1947 to work at Kaiser steel. And I'll let you talk about your parents.

**Marcille Christian** [00:01:58] And actually, Daddy had already built the house on Alder. The first one before he and Mama got married, before they came out. And he was working at steel mill and he met my uncle. Yeah. And who was living on Baseline and Tamarind. he met Uncle John and his wife, which was my mom's sister, my Aunt Tommy and kind of asked her, Hey, you got any more sisters? And as time progressed he and my mom met and got married and

then came out here. But for me as a kid, I remember there were black people. There wasn't a North Fontana, I guess per say, but just on the street of Alder, there was the Lenores, both two families of them, Linton and Summer Lenore and their family, their kids. There were, the Graves were there. There was Mr. Daniels, who he and his dad did plastering. They were already here and we had a, there was trash. There was the Lenore's there was black trash service. There was a whole community we had for basically for, you know, all our needs. And actually, I remember shopping down here, I guess off of Foothill. There was the Shopping Bag. Shopping Bag was the grocery store. There was the butcher down, down here also as well on Foothill. God, the Wrights lived here the Mr. Wright and his first wife, who passed from cancer before he moved to San Bernardino.

**Arah Parker** [00:04:25] Was that Deacon right?

**Marcille Christian** [00:04:27] Yeah, that was Deacon Wright, from church, from New Hope. 'Cause our family, me and my sister, we grew up in New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, San Bernardino when it was on on seventh and Harris Street in San Bernardino. I remember I kind of love the old church because there was, there is even a basement down on that one. And I remember when the church moved, must have been about, I must've been about 15 when the church moves from Seventh and Harris to where it is now on 17th Street. So I guess I've kind seen a lot.

**Frederick Christian** [00:05:09] When did the Davis' move in?

**Marcille Christian** [00:05:14] The Davis'? I remember forever.

**Frederick Christian** [00:05:15] When did they move in?

**Marcille Christian** [00:05:15] Across the street? One hall. Mr. Daniels lived there, I guess, for a few years because he had the garage 'cause you could drive your car in and it was, it was open on the bottom so he could work. So he had the auto thing there, too.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:05:32] Was that who had the auto garage?

**Arah Parker** [00:05:35] Mr. Daniels was actually one of the gentlemen, was actually my mother's godfather father, and he had his own mechanic. So the father and son, as she was mentioning, they would do plastering construction. And then my mother's godfather, he was a mechanic as well. So the house that was built directly across from where my grandparents lived, it was basically you drive up and then he couldn't work on the cars, you know, from, from that level. Mm.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:06:03] You mentioned that sort of all the needs of the community could sort of be met like there were different businesses. Can you tell me more about, sort of the different small business owners that were around?

**Marcille Christian** [00:06:14] Well, they were family. There were families just on the street, you know, there on Alder. It was a thriving community.

**Arah Parker** [00:06:24] I know our next door, so I grew up in the same house, obviously.

**Marcille Christian** [00:06:29] Yeah.

**Arah Parker** [00:06:30] So my grandparents, have mentioned. So our next door neighbors going to the north of us is actually my grandmother's cousin, Mr. and Mrs. Wilson Herbert and Susie Wilson. And Mr. Wilson, he also was a mechanic. So that would draw in a lot of, you know, people from the community and things like that. So the uncle that Aunt Cille mentioned my Uncle John. He knew Mr. Wilson very well as well. So the cars and then the Linore's had the trash as well. And then Mr. Daniels had the, you know, working in construction. He didn't have his own construction business, but he worked in construction as well. And then the other Wilsons, I went to school with the granddaughter, Corinne, Coco. Paul Wilson, what was her grandfather's name? I forgot her grandfather's name, but they had a construction company in the latter years as well.

**Marcille Christian** [00:07:18] Oh, okay.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:07:20] Well, thank you. And maybe you can tell us a little bit about your own parents move here.

**Frederick Christian** [00:07:25] My parents, again, my father was in World War Two. That's very common. They got me I don't know where they got married because I never bothered to ask or look it up, but apparently they got married and then moved to L.A. They stayed there primarily within the Los and Greater Los Angeles area, especially Santa Monica and Venice, because my father wanted to be with his older brother. He wanted his older brother to have family in the area, which was fine. But like I said, my, I have there's three brothers in my family. I the second brother, my older brother was born when I was born. My father basically said, I have boys. I need to give them room to be boys to grow up, to run, to throw, to jump, to yell. Okay. So that's why he originally moved out to Fontana area. Now the place where we lived was often referred to as the track because it was a track of houses. The track of houses was primarily built is to my understanding, for the work black workers working at Kaiser Steel. That's why that track of houses was built. That track, "the track", slowly became like the center of North Fontana in the sense that from there then people would move maybe a little bit north of Highland. I should have also given some some things, basically from Citrus Avenue. Don't know the east or the west end of it, I guess it's Los Cedros on the bottom and Toray on the top. Toray has been changed now to no, not dead, but Toray has now been changed to South Highland to kind of give you a feel of where it is and it would go out, let's see, Catawba, Almeria, I guess Almeria was the last street in the track. And then the track consisted of basically five main streets, one on the north, one on the south. Also, but, five main streets. I'm not going to name them all right now because I'll mess it up.

**Frederick Christian** [00:09:53] But I lived on Jacaranda, which was the middle street, so much so that when the new elementary school, Juniper Elementary opened at that time, all that area went to Juniper Juniper Elementary School and took them a good I don't know. I know two years later they were they had to split it up so that my half of the street and every one to the west then went to Redwood, which is where I started my kindergarten and first year were in Redwood. My second and third grade year was in Juniper and then they had to transfer because it was just too many blacks concentrated in that one school. So I went back to Redwood, the people on the east side of Jacaranda and the rest of the two streets going that direction went stayed at Juniper Elementary School. If you went to Juniper Elementary School, you would go to Fontana Junior High School. There was only one high school

Fontana High the side of street that I was on, went to Redwood Elementary School, Sequoia Junior High, and then to Fontana high school. So that's kind of the way that it was flowing in that area. Now to say that it kind of was the kind of grew into the heart of North Fontana because the Will Fong's had a store up there this was a a right now would be very much compared to a 7-Eleven it was a total store there was. I know there was at least one pool hall up that direction. There was. Eventually, we had the the recreation that was built up there by your mom or at least your mom helped a whole lot. And it was just kind of it was just kind of the heart. And then people as people moved more into that area, they would grow to the north of Highland Avenue. They would grow out further west of the track. There was some movement, of course, down to the south, but as Marcille was mentioning, there was a community loosely, loosely given a community that was already based around baseline. Then you had this community that was based just south of Highland, and it then grew, of course, north of Highland. And you're pretty much talking about everything from 1950 to about, I'll say 1972. That's the way things were. And then slowly, slowly. Well, blacks weren't allowed below Foothill originally, but slowly that changed.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:12:54] I would love to hear the story of your family moving, but since you leave work, I guess I wondered when you guys and your families first moved here, were they told stories about things that had happened previously or about that kind of base that that rule? Because I know in 1946 there was a fairly well known bombing of a black family that moved south. And I wondered if that was a story that you all would hear growing up, if that was like a living memory that people talked about or.

**Marcille Christian** [00:13:24] [unclear].

**Arah Parker** [00:13:25] My grandmother, both my grandmother and my mother mentioned the story. And I know it's with the Short family because I've done a little research on that. So I've heard that before my grandparents really migrated to the area, that there was another black family that lived south of Baseline and probably Foothill, and that it was the tagline of the race line is that base line is the race line. So my grandparents heard about that and it's been within our area, you know, hearing that story for a number of years that once the local white people in Fontana found out that this family, this black family, that they kind of could pass for being white, that they were living where they, quote unquote, were supposed to. That's when the house was mysteriously bombed and disguised as like with a kerosene lamp. And and I think from what I also understood, that the family the Short family also migrated east from from L.A., you know, to be out here kind of like what Uncle Fred's mentioning, about his family, to have more opportunity.

**Marcille Christian** [00:14:28] And while Fred went to, like Redwood Juniper and then, you know, on for us on Alder, we went to North Tamara for elementary and then Alder, I can remember when Alder Junior High was built and then we went to Alder for junior high. And then, as you said, everybody, Fontana just had the one high school which had a race riot every other year.

**Frederick Christian** [00:14:59] Every year.

**Marcille Christian** [00:15:00] Pretty much.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:15:01] I was going to ask what the relations we like in school. [crosstalk] So tell me tell me about that.

**Frederick Christian** [00:15:07] Well this I can pretty well document. 1965 was the L.A. Watts riots. So from 1965 to 1969, 70, which was my senior year, there was at least one race riot at Fontana High School. Every year during that time period, okay, that's fairly easy to document. It didn't happen in 1969-70, because basically a group of about five black guys kind of got together and we were sitting around and just talking one day and we were discussing that, that very fact. And we let's just not have one this year. This is our senior year. We just not going to have it. So whenever things would start, for whatever reason, one of the five, maybe six of us would always be somewhere around because we were seniors, because we did, you know, move around fairly freely. We were always, somebody was there to, "A riot is starting." No, it's not you on your own. That's pretty much a "that happened to me," where someone wanted to start something and it was stopped. Other times maybe there was a fight that got started in P.E. and then it was brought out to the lunch area. That was fairly I won't say common, but it wasn't unheard of. I mean, that happened. Okay. So a fight got started in P.E., they brought it out to the lunch area. Certain things were said. And once again, between the five or six of the black guys that were there, we just kind of calm down the situation and there was no race riot during my senior year.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:16:56] That's quite a story. And what would start these race riots in the school I mean?

**Frederick Christian** [00:17:01] Anything.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:17:01] Why every year?

**Frederick Christian** [00:17:04] You want the official or you want?

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:17:06] No, I want the real.

**Frederick Christian** [00:17:10] Well, the real is because we were youth growing up; because sometimes it's just males that are growing up are going to start fights among themselves. Sometimes it was, I mean, no doubt we knew that there was Ku Klux Klan there in Fontana. That was not a secret. Everyone knew that. Basically, people, especially people growing up in the area where I was in the track, we knew we're going to have to have a fight at some point. We had to be sure that the other people around us, that is the other black guys around us were able to fight also because you never know when it's going to start. But, you know, once it did, someone needed to have your back. So, yeah, that was. It was not an open secret. It was no secret at all. It was just the way it was. So what would start it? It may be two people in one classroom setting that just didn't see eye to eye on something. It may be something, like I said, it started in a in a competition in some basketball game or baseball game or the PE field it could be seemingly anything. But once it did start, generally it would blow for about 3 to 5 days. Police may or may not get called, but things would eventually calm down and people would go back to doing what they were doing before.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:18:57] Um, well. That's a, that's a good explanation.

**Ellen Turner** [00:19:00] That's the real.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:19:01] That's the real.

**Frederick Christian** [00:19:03] Some of the excuses was the wind, the wind.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:19:06] The wind?

**Frederick Christian** [00:19:06] Yeah. Yeah.

**Arah Parker** [00:19:07] The wind is very forceful in this area.

**Frederick Christian** [00:19:08] This official reasons given for one of the race riots. Cause the wind, soon as the wind stopped, won't be no more. Yeah, right. But that was the official thing given so far as the Herald News local paper was given.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:19:29] Mrs. Turner, why don't you tell us a little bit about how your family came here and what it was like for you to grow up?

**Ellen Turner** [00:19:36] So we came from, we from New Orleans. My father got a job in Los Angeles, and we lived in Los Angeles for I guess I was in. Oh, I don't even remember what grade I was in.

**Frederick Christian** [00:19:46] Third or fourth?

**Ellen Turner** [00:19:46] No, when i came here

**Frederick Christian** [00:19:51] That's what I meant third or fourth.

**Ellen Turner** [00:19:53] Yeah. When I, when we moved the family moved to Pomona, then we moved to Fontana and moved on Arrow in Fontana and it wasn't. And I went to Redwood. That's where I met Fred. Yeah. Uh, Redwood Elementary School. And it wasn't long before, in fact, the house that we lived in was a gas station, and my mother chose that. that place because she wanted to have a place where she could have a newspaper, one to she had a offset printing press. So she wanted to have a place where she could do print the paper. And for us to live in that was a commercial building that was built. So we lived there. And so they. We were contacted and told us that we were, couldn't live there because we were in the wrong side of town. So anyway, I mean, I was young because I didn't know, you know. So anyway, we moved to the tracks. We found out, we found a house in North Fontana in the tracks on Almeria.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:20:50] Okay, so what year was that that you moved out?

**Ellen Turner** [00:20:52] What year was that?

**Frederick Christian** [00:20:54] I know you were either in third or fourth grade.

**Ellen Turner** [00:21:01] Okay, so. What year was that? When we were in the third and fourth grade.

**Arah Parker** [00:21:04] Is this like the late '50s?

**Frederick Christian** [00:21:05] '50.

**Ellen Turner** [00:21:07] Comes.

**Frederick Christian** [00:21:07] Sometime between '57 and '59.

**Ellen Turner** [00:21:09] Okay.

**Frederick Christian** [00:21:11] Best I can give.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:21:12] So.

**Ellen Turner** [00:21:13] So.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:21:14] Your mom was already publishing a paper then?

**Ellen Turner** [00:21:16] She was already, yes, she had a paper in Louisiana, she had already started printing the paper. She had her printing press, her offset printing press. But when we got to Fontana, she wanted to continue the paper anyway. Well, she couldn't, she couldn't because we were living. We moved to a house in the track. And um, so, you know, we lived in the track, and then we moved from there on Almeria to Juniper and on Juniper we had the property, we had like five or six acres there. And so she had enough room to have the printing press set up in what was the garage, you know, so, so that's when she actually started the newspaper, the Fontana Messenger.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:22:04] The Fontana Messenger. Alright, alright. So she started that by the early '60s.

**Ellen Turner** [00:22:09] Yes.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:22:11] And did she tell you stories about that first, uh, barrier that she hit? I mean, is that partly what motivated her activism in Fontana?

**Ellen Turner** [00:22:22] It did. Yes. She did tell us, you know that, she knew that she moved to the... My mother and father divorced when we got to California. So she said that they thought they thought moving to a better area condition, because we living in New Orleans was, of course, segregated, you know? Oo they thought that was gonna be better coming to California because, you know, was going to be better. And so she'd realized when she got here, there's was as much prejudice here as it was where they had come from. So so she said we have to move because the Ku Klux Klan is here, too. You know, we couldn't move, the move, so we moved.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:23:02] Yeah. Yeah. Tell me a little bit about the paper. I have heard that it existed, but tell me what the paper, you guys, maybe you remember it too, from when you were growing up. What? What did the paper do and what did it mean to the community?

**Ellen Turner** [00:23:14] Well she did was she, of course, had to get stories from the people in the community because we're new to the community. So you talk to people in the community,

find what's going on in the high schools. A lot of fact, I saw, I found a picture of Cathy Hogan and Zaza Ralph in the office last night when I was looking for pictures.

**Marcille Christian** [00:23:35] Oh, well.

**Ellen Turner** [00:23:37] Yeah. And such that my mother took a picture of them because there was a white a white girl and a black boy together. So that was one of the front page articles at that time.

**Frederick Christian** [00:23:50] That must have been roughly between 1969, '67 and '69. Maybe '70. Okay.

**Ellen Turner** [00:24:02] That is the story. Yes. So anyway. So. Yes. But in her doing her seeking for stories. That's when she found out about other things going on in the community. And people were not happy with if she was not happy, but she realized everybody else wasn't happy to so anyways, she was talking to people in the community, and they started a little group at our house and started talking about things that they didn't like and wanted to have, like sidewalks, curb cuts, street lights, things like that. Because that we had no sidewalks. Our streets were, you know, barren. You know, so anyway, so that was one of the first things they were trying to do. And that led to other things in the community that they wanted to be done, but nobody wanted to go to city council meeting. Well, at that time, County Board of Supervisors meeting because we lived in the county because North Fontana is in the county of San Bernardino not in the city of Fontana. So we just go to county board of supervisors meeting to advocate for that. And so once they found out that my mother was advocating for things to be better in North Fontana, then we became harassed by the Klu Klux Klan that was telling her to stop things. Bad things were going to happen if you continue. Of course, she didn't stop. And then she decided to run for school board and that didn't go over too well. And when they did, they did burn a cross our front yard. But because she was forewarned this was going to happen, she had a fire break around our house, we think became and just weed abatement and it was all around the house. There was no shrubberies or nothing. So when they set the field on fire or burned the cross and the cross was burned down, then it wouldn't burn up the house. So anyway, we that happened when we the next year when when they threatened us, my mother said, you know, you guys are gonna go to dad's house this year. So, so twice we had a cross burn in our front yard. When we lived on Juniper.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:26:17] And what year was that? Our historian?

**Frederick Christian** [00:26:19] I don't know.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:26:20] You don't know.

**Frederick Christian** [00:26:21] Excuse me? I didn't. I was not aware that had happened. I mean, part of it is I'm elementary, maybe junior high school. So we're talking about I'm between the years of five and maybe 13, so I wasn't having to pay attention to all that I was having to pay attention to growing up. So I didn't really know that, I don't doubt that it happened. Okay, but no, I didn't know about it when it was happening. And

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:26:56] What was that like for you as a kid to sort of see that happening right here?

**Ellen Turner** [00:26:59] Well, you know, first let me talk about our relationships. The way we even became friends is First elementary school. My mother worked for the state of California for it. And once she found out that, you know, where we were living in anyway, she decided. And even as even though I was old enough to stay home by myself, she decided we needed a babysitter. So. So she asked Marcille's mom to be my babysitter. Okay. To be our babysitter. So. Now, now, now. We're not going to Tamarind now.

**Marcille Christian** [00:27:37] North Tamarind, because I went to only north Tamarind. And I guess I'm not sure about fifth grade I think it was like fifth or sixth grade. Right. And then we went to Alder.

**Ellen Turner** [00:27:47] But I was supposed to go to either one of those schools because we didn't live in that area, but because she was our baby, my baby sitter.

**Marcille Christian** [00:27:53] Oh, Ellen would kind of she, yeah. Ellen would come home with me.

**Ellen Turner** [00:28:00] Yes. So that's how we met. And we've been friends for all of.

**Marcille Christian** [00:28:06] Since then.

**Ellen Turner** [00:28:07] Yeah.

**Arah Parker** [00:28:08] So they knew of your family before me.

**Ellen Turner** [00:28:10] Yeah.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:28:11] That is wonderful. And your mom partly didn't want you staying at home because of all that stuff that was happening.

**Ellen Turner** [00:28:16] Yes, yes. Didn't want for us to stay home by ourselves. Yeah. So. Oh. No, it was of course, it was frightening. Of course, you know, and we'd they just told us. They told me what was going on. My dad told us what was going on. So you know why we moved to California and and they hated that they put us in this position because we couldn't stay where we were and, you know, and all that. But anyway, um, she decided she's going to stay here, you know? Yeah. So we stayed and the rest is history. You know.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:28:50] So tell me about those early fights that your mom was involved in and other community leaders. And maybe you guys remember this as you guys were getting older, too. What were, so they were fighting for street lights and what else were the kind of struggles to improve North Fontana and to fight against some of those racist barriers?

**Frederick Christian** [00:29:08] Well, I want to state this. Since she brought up the idea of street lights. I remember again, I lived on the middle street in the 'Track' Jacaranda. They put lights on there first. And it was a big deal. I mean, literally all the neighbors came out and watched the first probably for the first five days at least, when that street light clicked on the first time. It was a big deal. Now, I did not know that there were people fighting to get those improvements in the community at the time. But I do definitely remember everybody going

outside to see the street light come on for the very first time. Seems to me there was already fire. A fire hydrant was already there at the point, but there was no street lighting at all.

**Ellen Turner** [00:30:04] What about sidewalks?

**Frederick Christian** [00:30:05] No sidewalks didn't come to the city.

**Marcille Christian** [00:30:09] South Fontana didn't have sidewalks.

**Frederick Christian** [00:30:11] No sidewalks didn't come until that became part of the city of Fontana.

**Ellen Turner** [00:30:16] Yeah.

**Marcille Christian** [00:30:17] We just got sidewalks.

**Arah Parker** [00:30:20] So where we lived. We annexed from Fontana to Rialto. So that actually happened when her and my mother were in high school. So because of that, when I came along, I had the choice well my mother, I should say, my mother had the choice for me to attend either Rialto Unified or Fontana. So I went to Fontana Unified. So I attended North Tamarind Alder Middle School, and then I went to a different high school. I went to A.B. Miller High School and Fontana High School, and even at A.B. Miller when I was in high school from 96 through 2000, we didn't have sidewalks like No, once you left campus. So when kids walk home from school, they had to walk and it was houses. Now be at the walk in the field and all this stuff. So it's a lot different now.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:31:06] When you guys were growing up here, I mean, what did North Fontana look like? Right? I mean, was it still lots of fields and farms everywhere? I mean, tell me kind of what what did it look like in there?

**Frederick Christian** [00:31:19] Not not fields. Because especially in the track where I was living, it was houses. I mean, it was a track of houses. On the other hand, the properties themselves, I am going to estimate or guesstimate it was probably like a sixth of an acre. So you had a front yard, you had a backyard. While we were growing up, we always had chickens, we sometimes had ducks and rabbits and that sort of thing. Growing up, other people had pretty much the same idea. I do remember there was a couple of people down on baseline area that had hogs or pigs. I don't recall anybody having any cattle or anything like that. Now again, the areas it was outside of the track houses itself, there was more space, so some of them had horses. But again, I don't recall anybody having cattle.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:32:20] Yeah.

**Ellen Turner** [00:32:21] And how we. Now, we live in the same community. I mean were all living north the Baseline. Okay. And have different life experiences.

**Frederick Christian** [00:32:28] North of Foothill anyway.

**Ellen Turner** [00:32:29] Yeah. Yeah.

**Frederick Christian** [00:32:30] Because the Rankins were down on Foothill.

**Marcille Christian** [00:32:31] With five acres.

**Ellen Turner** [00:32:33] I lived on Juniper. We had, like I said, five acres that we had cows, pigs and chickens. Rabbits and cows, you know.

**Frederick Christian** [00:32:40] Okay I didn't know that. But okay.

**Arah Parker** [00:32:41] So for us, we had more room. Yeah, there was fields. My grandfather, my great uncle, my great uncle bought five acres of property first and split that with my grandfather. So from even me growing up, there was always a lot of room to play. Yes, a lot of space.

**Marcille Christian** [00:33:01] Yeah. And then Mrs. Johnny Fern had the other.

**Arah Parker** [00:33:04] She had the other property.

**Marcille Christian** [00:33:04] The other property in between us and the Wilsons. And so. So that was four spots of family right there for us.

**Arah Parker** [00:33:15] But even for me growing up. I remember shepherds being around with their sheep.

**Marcille Christian** [00:33:19] Oh yeah. They would come through.

**Arah Parker** [00:33:21] Yeah, they would come through a lot and that I was quite used to that. And actually before, before grandpa passed, before the fence line went all the way back, there was actually a lamb that actually came.

**Marcille Christian** [00:33:32] Straight up to the back yard.

**Arah Parker** [00:33:34] So I remember going out the backyard for whatever reason I was about maybe between six and eight years old and I could see this animal. In the backyard, it was not sure.

**Marcille Christian** [00:33:43] Yeah, I haven't seen that one before.

**Ellen Turner** [00:33:46] Do you know why we get a lot of lambs when the shepherds came through here to do the weed abating.

**Arah Parker** [00:33:49] Right? Yeah. Yeah, that makes sense. Yeah.

**Ellen Turner** [00:33:51] You have to be.

**Marcille Christian** [00:33:53] Safe to graze.

**Arah Parker** [00:33:54] Here.

**Ellen Turner** [00:33:55] Because we had it, rock. Tumbleweeds and you know, a lot of reasons things. And so the shippers would come through and they would how we do business.

**Arah Parker** [00:34:05] Yeah. So you haven't seen.

**Arah Parker** [00:34:08] That in a number years? In a number of years. And then my grandparents had chickens as well as well at one point because the last one passed away when I was a little kid.

**Marcille Christian** [00:34:19] Yeah, they had the chicken. So I remember. I remember the chickens. And when Daddy raised the chickens so he'd get the little baby chickens, he'd come down to the feed store.

**Arah Parker** [00:34:30] Okay. Oh, after a year away?

**Marcille Christian** [00:34:32] Yeah, it was. It was way down here, officer. And he'd get the baby chickens or the chicken feed. We had chickens, we had ducks, we had rabbits. There was always a garden.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:34:44] Mhm. And I was going to have bingo then.

**Marcille Christian** [00:34:47] Yeah. Yeah. We always had it. I live in Riverside, I still have a garden.

**Arah Parker** [00:34:53] You know.

**Frederick Christian** [00:34:54] We had gardens also, but like I said in the track of houses it was less space. Yeah, we had chickens, we had. We always had chickens. We sometimes had geese, never a duck. Just because if you have a duck, you got to have a duck pond. Mosquitoes. So we never had that, but we did have rabbits. And of course, the obligatory dogs. I never was into cats.

**Marcille Christian** [00:35:23] We had some Oh, I love cats. We had cats because of me and we had turkeys for a while.

**Frederick Christian** [00:35:29] Yeah, we had turkeys also.

**Marcille Christian** [00:35:30] Yeah. And what were those? Daddy had those fussing hens for a while.

**Frederick Christian** [00:35:36] You see my parents were also both from Texas. Her parents are both from Texas. So to learn how to pluck a chicken so you could have chicken. Dinner was common. Yeah.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:35:48] Folks brought the south with them.

**Frederick Christian** [00:35:49] Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

**Arah Parker** [00:35:51] Their world.

**Ellen Turner** [00:35:52] Yeah. Yeah.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:35:54] That was your job.

**Ellen Turner** [00:35:54] That was my job to snap two chicken's neck.

**Arah Parker** [00:35:57] Oh.

[crosstalk]

**Frederick Christian** [00:36:01] And my dad was right, *pop*. Then we pluck it, put him in the hot water and. Yeah, okay.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:36:11] All right. So now what? Ah, so you talk to us about some of the jobs people had in the community, but you said a lot of the folks in the track worked at Kaiser Steel.

**Frederick Christian** [00:36:20] I won't say a lot. I'll say there was that's why the track was originally built. Yeah. Yeah. Once the houses are there, people could basically go anywhere. My father also worked in construction. He never worked at Kaiser Steel. He never wanted any of his boys to work at Kaiser Steel. I did work there for just a little what was it, three and a half, four and a half years. But we'll hold that for a while. People just had various jobs is the best way to say it. There was a I'm not sure if it was a munitions factory or a firework factory that was out.

**Marcille Christian** [00:37:05] On the farm. It was.

**Frederick Christian** [00:37:07] It's out.

**Marcille Christian** [00:37:08] East of Royals. Yeah, it was sort of, Like Locus. Yeah, somewhere up there. Yeah. Because it blew up a couple of times.

**Frederick Christian** [00:37:17] My mom used to work there. She happened to be working there for, like, three years. And then she got sick. Or maybe she had gotten pregnant with my youngest brother, I'm not sure. But I know that she was off for like three weeks when it it blew up. So praise God.

**Marcille Christian** [00:37:38] Took care of that job.

**Arah Parker** [00:37:41] Saved her life.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:37:42] Her mother wants you to work at Kaiser Steel. Yeah.

**Frederick Christian** [00:37:48] He and my mom stressed to all of his children. Go ahead and get your education and do something better than what I'm doing now. My father never had, uh. I'm going to say sixth grade education. And again, he grew up on a Texas farm. kay. He had to work hard. He had to work with his hands. He got into construction. He realized that that was could be a dangerous job. And even if it wasn't dangerous, you had to work hard

again. By the grace of God, the only thing that ever happened to him is he broke a finger one time and had to be off work for a couple of days. I think it was about a week. Other than that, he never got hurt at work. But he saw the potentials. So he didn't want his sons to do that. He didn't want his sons working at Kaiser Steel. I don't know why. He never told me. I didn't have to ask. Get your education and do some better. So. Okay. As it worked out, my older brother, myself and my younger brother all graduated from high school a year. My older brother went on to Chaffey College and eventually got his AA degree. I went to Azusa Pacific and got a B.A. and became a teacher, actually came back and talked for Fontana High School for just a few. And younger brother, he was a musician. He's still a musician. He's been living 35 years or so in Las Vegas playing music there. So that's kind of, you know, a snapshot of my family.

**Frederick Christian** [00:39:28] So far as working at Kaiser Steel, after I graduated from college, a friend who was a counselor, Mr. Read, was his name counselor at finding a high school. He was recruiting, especially blacks, to work there at Kaiser Kaiser Steel. And he basically said, okay, here's a summer job for you. Do this for the summer. I had just graduated from college, do this for the summer, make a little bit of money and go on and do what you're going to do. Well, what I was going to do was go back to college, finish up my teaching degree, and become a teacher. As it worked out, once I got into Kaiser Steel, I knew maybe 12 guys in the area where I was working, which was the Coke Ovens at the time. And they were explaining to me, You don't have to quit Kaiser Steel to go back to college. They have what's called a school schedule. School schedule meant that I get to choose my whichever shift because it's around the clock. So it's three shifts. You can choose your shifts and you could choose your days off. You signed a specific number of months or weeks or whatever it was, and you were there during that time. You were at school, and then as soon as your school came out or your school was over, then you came back into your regular position. You didn't lose any seniority. Seniority was a big thing for Kaiser Steel because that's one of the ways that you moved up in pay. And I'll throw this in to I work from Kaiser, I work for Kaiser Steel roughly June of 1974 to October 1st of 78. I was still working for Kaiser Steel when I qualified for an FHA loan to get my house. I had already put in my two week notice. Okay. You're going to work until October one. So I basically work from January till October one. I made \$5,000 more working there at Kaiser Steel that year than my first teacher's salary. Oh, well, if I had not have been working at Kaiser Steel, I would not have qualified for the FHA loan. That's the way that the pay structures were set up. But again, I'm gonna say, by the grace of God, I did qualify. Got into the house, then became a teacher. And that certainly was a much smoother road in times of steel. Uh huh. Yeah.

**Ellen Turner** [00:42:31] Yeah. And how. Where have you been living since then?

**Frederick Christian** [00:42:35] Riverside.

**Arah Parker** [00:42:35] I know what we're talking about. We still live in the same house, so.

**Ellen Turner** [00:42:42] It was a blessing.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:42:44] Yeah. Okay. So I want to return a little bit to the story of your mom, if we can. And I don't know if you guys have things to add, but obviously there's a recreation center named after your mom. And I've heard some stories about the various things she was involved in, but I would love to know more. In particular, I think in the sixties, she was involved in a bunch of different kinds of civil rights activism, allied with some of the folks in San

Bernardino, too. I know Frances Grace talked about in the interview she did some of the amazing activism that was going on in Fontana. And so I wonder if you can tell me just any other stories you remember from that era of some of the work that she was doing and who else kind of was part of that work in Fontana with her?

**Ellen Turner** [00:43:30] There's like I said, there's a lot of people, yeah. She did network with a lot of people, you know, and a lot of people in the track even to get to the sidewalk. Her custom gardens and things that that kind of thing going to people that she was talking to where people that were Minnie Tisby. Do you remember Mrs. Tisby? Okay. Ms. Ricker.

**Frederick Christian** [00:43:52] Oh yeah.

**Ellen Turner** [00:43:52] Okay.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:43:53] Okay tell me about them cause I've heard their names.

**Ellen Turner** [00:43:58] They're the people in the community. Leaders in the community that wanted things to be different, you know, want to change. But people were afraid, you know, so they didn't want to go to the kind of person who opposes office or take the view that the person. So my mother used the newspaper to be a voice so the problems and concerns that was going on in the community to put it in print. Okay.

**Frederick Christian** [00:44:23] And so I'm going to add also, my mom worked with your mom for a few different projects, put it that way. Okay. And again, like she was saying, people didn't want to stand up to, you know, to the San Bernardino Board of supervisors at the time it was all county land. So can we do this? That's kind of how the Black History Parade started not being. No, I know not. Did I know that then? But I'm saying that's also that's how it started.

**Ellen Turner** [00:44:58] But yeah, but so what they did was these ladies I can't remember. Remember one man. Mr. Burns, do you remember James Burns? His name? James Burns. I can't remember his first name because, you know, the kids used to call him Mr. Burns.

**Arah Parker** [00:45:11] About who? I don't remember.

**Ellen Turner** [00:45:13] Burns. Yeah, but it was.

**Frederick Christian** [00:45:15] Probably Will Fong was probably in part of it. Oh, he was, he wasn't okay.

**Ellen Turner** [00:45:20] No. Because they didn't want to jeopardize their business .

**Marcille Christian** [00:45:23] What about Dorothy Grant with stuff going on at school.

**Ellen Turner** [00:45:26] No, she wasn't. You know, she wasn't wasn't involved with anything. Um, and Anita and I was talking about that. She was. It was a whole nother story.

**Arah Parker** [00:45:36] You.

**Ellen Turner** [00:45:39] Know? Um, so, my mother used the newspaper as the voice of the community. Yeah. And then she would go to the meetings and not to voice their concerns as

community. Of course, we could report what was being said and done at the meetings and put in the paper, you know, so.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:45:57] But so it became that sort of point person that would take the heat to say.

**Arah Parker** [00:46:03] Yes.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:46:04] You said somebody might have been worried about jeopardizing their business. How would a standing up jeopardize their business?

**Frederick Christian** [00:46:10]

Mr. Wil Fong had a store. Like I said, it would be the equivalent, I guess, of a 7-Eleven. Now. It was a mom and pop grocery store and they literally sold everything to the community. Okay. They were leading socialites, I guess you want to say. And so it was a business for him. There were also, you know, gas stations. He didn't own that. But I'm saying it was kind of across the street, catty corner and barbershops and beauty shops in the area and that sort of thing. He himself was perhaps perhaps the. Leading money maker in that area at that time. And so if he didn't want to hurt his business by standing up, I could say I understand that.

**Ellen Turner** [00:47:02] And of course, you know, do remember Jimmy? Well they called him Jimmy Wine, the liquor store down on Highland? I remember I remember we had the liquor store in the laundromat that was down there.

**Frederick Christian** [00:47:13] Oh, yeah. Yeah. Okay.

**Ellen Turner** [00:47:15] And then the Blue Blaze was down the street.

**Arah Parker** [00:47:19] Of.

**Ellen Turner** [00:47:21] And all those. Yeah, well, the same thing, you know, they didn't want to jeopardize or have the county or the sheriff's department or anybody come harass them in their business. And so, therefore, they didn't wouldn't, you know, take a stand. They would come and talk to us, talk to Mama. Not us because I was a kid talked to Mama, you know, talked about what was going on. Just tell us. You should go when you go. Tell him this. When you go, tell him that you know, that kind of stuff.

**Arah Parker** [00:47:53] So she was the messenger. What about Mr. Davis? Mr. Ted Davis?

**Ellen Turner** [00:47:57] Yeah. Okay. Mr. Davis wasn't involved until after the Civil Rights Act, and we were able to go over and we were able to vote. Was Mr. Mrs. Davis was involved in that? Um, um, not Bethel A.M.E. Oh, yeah. Bethel A.M.E. So Mama asked the pastor. Pastor Brooks I think. Mr. Brooks It was Brokins. Yeah. Was the pastor there. If we could have the vote there.

**Arah Parker** [00:48:30] Okay.

**Ellen Turner** [00:48:30] So that we wouldn't, they wouldn't burn down the church, you know, we were no problem. She thought probably that people voted at the church, so did that. And

then after a few years, then the thing about church and state came into play and the church decided they didn't want to have it there. And so Mr. Davis opened up his garage.

**Arah Parker** [00:48:51] Okay. So and that's why he had moved, because he had had the house after Mr. Daniels did across the street from us.

**Ellen Turner** [00:48:58] That's when he moved down to Oleander.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:49:03] Back up for a second, was it hard to vote in Fontana before.

**Ellen Turner** [00:49:08] We couldn't vote. We didn't have voting rights that was before?

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:49:13] Well, I know, but I guess I didn't know that that was a problem in North Fontana. I mean, in San Bernardino, folks were voting in the twenties and thirties and forties, but were there they were finding out that.

**Ellen Turner** [00:49:24] You couldn't vote until after '65.

**Marcille Christian** [00:49:27] I don't remember not being able to vote for your son. Your mom and daddy always voted.

**Arah Parker** [00:49:33] Yes, you know, and so I did a lot of research. And I do remember there was a document that I pulled a couple of years ago that had like voting information for people on a respected street and I know it had it for my grandparents the street that we lived on on Alder and even for grandma's side the family, Aunt Georgie in Redlands.

**Arah Parker** [00:49:58] Oh, over in Redlands over on Orange Street.

**Arah Parker** [00:50:00] They were on Pioneer. I think.

**Marcille Christian** [00:50:03] They had in mind.

**Arah Parker** [00:50:04] Your son, my other aunt and uncle Coleman. Thomas Coleman. Thomas and Georgie Thomas.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:50:11] Yeah. Yes. All right. So, right, so but maybe the church got more involved in kind of vote now later on. Tell me a little bit more about the churches. So you guys were a member of Bethel AME were you guys also? No. You were.

**Marcille Christian** [00:50:23] North San Bernardino.

**Frederick Christian** [00:50:25] And I was Community Baptist Church in Fontana. Okay.

**Arah Parker** [00:50:28] Okay.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:50:29] So what was the Bethel AME Church like here?

**Ellen Turner** [00:50:34] It was just from 7:00. All day.

**Arah Parker** [00:50:37] To all night, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:50:42] So that was a big part of community. Like for you.

**Arah Parker** [00:50:44] For years. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Ellen Turner** [00:50:47] Yeah. That was just a way of life. So I was the choir rehearsal for church. Everything was going around going to church.

**Arah Parker** [00:50:55] Yeah.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:50:57] And whether other big social organizations, community organizations that you remember that maybe your mom helped start.

**Ellen Turner** [00:51:04] Well, then one later it was already started. That was the women's club. I know they had a black women's club.

**Arah Parker** [00:51:13] Oh.

**Ellen Turner** [00:51:13] Mrs. Margaret Johnson was the president.

**Arah Parker** [00:51:16] Oh, yeah. I did not know that. Okay.

**Ellen Turner** [00:51:19] I didn't know it either.

**Marcille Christian** [00:51:19] Until I got to start Googling stuff.

**Ellen Turner** [00:51:22] She told me, 'cause I started doing oral history. I said, you know, I'm you about what's going on. But then I went, Yeah. And I went up and I've gotten some recorded history too. And also so I, you know, of course audio history. Yeah. But yeah, she told me that she was, um, it was a woman's club and she was the president. It was not the women's club that's here.

**Arah Parker** [00:51:42] Not the one downtown.

**Ellen Turner** [00:51:44] No, not that one. But so. Yeah, so they, they. It had to be because we didn't come to find out until, you know, later. I mean, that's why I said you start with Marcil because their history was before our.

**Arah Parker** [00:51:55] Yeah, yeah.

**Ellen Turner** [00:51:56] Yeah, yeah.

**Arah Parker** [00:51:57] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Marcille Christian** [00:51:59] So, so I remember Seventh Day Adventist vacation Bible School over year when I was a kid on. Yeah. On Juniper. Yeah. Yeah.

**Frederick Christian** [00:52:07] Just a general statement. Of course, at that time, the black churches were the social hubs of everything. So most of my growing up playmates put it that way was based from Community Baptist Church, which it just made it simple for me so that.

Okay, let's have a softball game. Okay, we got the Kirklands here, we got the Joneses here, and it was basically Community Baptist Church that started it. And then other people may see the game being played and just come over and join in. Generally speaking, that this was fine. Everyone kind of knew each other at least, and it wasn't like a big argument or anything. It just was a space. Let's play baseball. And again, we're talking about the late fifties. So Jackie Robinson had just broken the color barrier in, you know, the late forties. So to play baseball was a very, very big and important thing.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:53:12] And so you remember a lot of baseball games. Did you guys have like teams and play around the region or just kinda informal.

**Frederick Christian** [00:53:18] Well, both, actually. What I mean is if you're just having a community thing going, it may just start spontaneously on a Saturday afternoon. Now you're talking about adults from 45, I would say to children as young as 12 may be involved in that sort of game. However, it's also true that I grew up playing Little League. From the time I was officially Little League started at ten years old, 10 to 12 year old. Before that, they had a minor and a farm team. Okay, so I started when I was seven years old and that's what organized baseball. There were probably ten other black guys in the same organizations at that time. It was baseball. It was a fun organized thing. And yes, these were leagues. The Little League World Series was already going on, at least I think it was going on. I do know that we had some real competitive games so far as Fontana little league and, uh.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:54:41] And these were sort of integrated groups of kids.

**Frederick Christian** [00:54:43] These were integrated. Yes. These are integrated.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:54:46] Some stories of early, early. But maybe just the generation before you of kind of like Little League networks and.

**Arah Parker** [00:54:52] Oh, okay.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:54:53] But that's. I think you would have been a little older then.

**Frederick Christian** [00:54:55] I did. Yeah. I never heard of any such thing. From the time that I was at least eight. Yeah, I was in integrated baseball leagues. Integrated baseball teams. And it was interesting because, okay, these are all volunteer coaches and umpires and all that sort of stuff. So when I finally graduated from college and went to Kaiser Steel, here's my ex coach.

**Arah Parker** [00:55:24] Oh.

**Frederick Christian** [00:55:25] Working on this line of progression. Come on in, Fred. We've been waiting for you for a while. What are you talking about? We knew you were coming in because he had been there for 25 years or so. He kind of had some input as to who would be on his crew. So he knew I was coming. So he. Boom.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:55:48] That's good. That's very cool. Okay, so let's circle back. And you told me a little bit about. Tell me a little bit about the history of the Black History Parade Committee. I don't know if I said that right. Where did that come from? How did it emerge? Yeah. Tell me a bit about that history.

**Ellen Turner** [00:56:08] I wouldn't let me. One thing when you asked about Mr. Davis. Mr. Davis was very involved in community after him, after my mother, and that they moved the voting thing, the polls to his garage. He and my mother became acquaintances. So they had some of the same interests, but they decided that they had to do the good cop bad cop thing. And so when they would go to city council meetings were later on, you know, then we became part of the city or involved more with the city than with the county. Anyway, we were we were in what's called special districts. So being in special, special districts. The county went over certain aspects of the things that's going on in the community in Fontana, in the city was over some other things. So they had to go to the count, to the county supervisors meeting, as well as the city council meetings. So when they would go to the meetings, one would my mother would always be fussing, raising hell. And so, Mr. Davis, would be the one trying to. Okay, Jessie let's do this and kind of like a comment, you know. So I realized later in life that they had strategized this, okay, they're ready.

**Marcille Christian** [00:57:20] They'd already worked it out.

**Ellen Turner** [00:57:21] They had already worked it out, you know. But yeah, because I'm like, why are they always, you know, fussing and then it comes out anyway. So he was the they were he was involved that, you know, with the in the community and him and his wife his wife not so much because she was a Sunday school teacher. I think she was.

**Arah Parker** [00:57:41] Was she taught school. She school. Yes.

**Arah Parker** [00:57:44] She went back to school later in life because I think my mom was a student at Cal State San Bernardino and Ms. Davis was a student at that time as well. So that's like in the late, early mid seventies.

**Ellen Turner** [00:57:58] So yeah, so, so we generally like from now from like the early sixties to the seventies then things going on. But um, but as far as the parade goes, yeah. With the parade was when Mrs. Tisby, Ms. Becker, with all these ladies, they got to get they was and my mother and they were talking about the they were thinking that in fact what they were doing, the Martin Luther King, it was a sermon and it wasn't looking. I couldn't have a little black and white TV. So anyway, to look at that and they heard this sermon on the drum major instinct.

**Jennifer Tilton** [00:58:46] On the what?

**Ellen Turner** [00:58:47] Drum, a drum major's instinct, you know. And so after that sermon they formulated that I don't know how that but the lightbulb came on but it did that they would do a parade. But previous to that I wanted to be in the pageant. I wanted to do this Fontana pageant, and I couldn't be anything but let me be in this Fontana's pageant. My mother said, okay, so we have our own pageant. So we had a pageant, okay, we had a pageant and Varnell was the pageant coordinator at that time. Do you remember her? You know.

**Frederick Christian** [00:59:24] Bernard Davis.

**Ellen Turner** [00:59:25] Reneau Mayfield.

**Frederick Christian** [00:59:30] Too long ago? No. Okay.

**Ellen Turner** [00:59:34] Okay. You know, I tell the kids names. But anyway, so the other pageant and so after we had the pageant. They said ok so now we need to have a parade. Right. So it's that was like on the first the first weekend of February that they heard the sermon and they were able to pull together a parade by the end of February, by the last Saturday in February. And they just used the resources right there in the community with people, you know, in the community and to do in the parade and Grady from "Sanford and Sons" and he lived here in Fontana and so he was in that he was the grand marshal and you know so just use just community resources to to have the first parade.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:00:21] And when was the first parade?

**Ellen Turner** [01:00:23] That was in '68.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:00:24] '68. Wow, so right before MLK was assassinated. And has it been going on every year since?

**Ellen Turner** [01:00:33] Every year since. The Pageant and the parade.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:00:36] Wow.

**Ellen Turner** [01:00:37] In fact, because this was the first parade in the county and another one to talk to the county board of supervisors and asked them. "Would they sponsor the parade?" So San Bernardino County became the sponsor of the parade. So every year after that, they made sure that we were able to have the parade. But the reason because to close out the streets and have the security for the, you know, the sheriff's and make it possible to have the parade. So we organized the parade every year, but they take care of the king of the streets and all the other things that has to.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:01:14] Tell me why the parade and the pageant are important to the community. Why? Why do they matter to the community?

**Ellen Turner** [01:01:21] Well, at that time, it was a way for everyone to get together and be proud of what we were doing. And we had the Little League and the other, you know, the different teams and different things that kids are involved in doing was in the parade. So that was actually we have to show off what their kids are doing. Drill teams, bands, football, you know, that kind of thing was in the parade. So it was a way for people to show off what they were doing and be proud - parents, be proud of what their children were doing. You know.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:01:55] How about for you as a kid growing up here, what did that the parade mean to you? Growing up.

**Arah Parker** [01:02:01] So for me, I have to confess, I did not attend the parade growing up, so I've always heard about it through the work that Ellen and that were her mother, you know, established for me in high school was a little bit different. So again late 1990s through early 2000 so to be honest I was more involved with basketball so I was a little bit more involved with Community Basketball League in Rialto. And actually, to be honest, that was actually it was a league started from my mom's friend and former coworker that he established on the

all girls basketball league because we didn't have anything for for young ladies at that time. And actually from that I played on predominantly black teams from that, and that led to me playing basketball in high school and again we were predominantly black team. So we were always used to to being together and things like that. So it still celebrates black history, but just in a different way. Yeah.

**Ellen Turner** [01:02:58] In the parade, the sermon was about that anybody could serve that everybody could be a service, you know, could be of service. And so the thing even with the parade was involving the people showing that, you know, that you can be of service in your community, especially during times of problems, the things that was going on in the world, you know, and so so they anybody to be of service and you can serve it no matter how big or small your service was, you know, you serve. So that that was the other thing that kind of motivated them to do this parade and, and we kind of still stick to same thing and have that same, you know, float for the parade and for the pageant. Yeah.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:03:44] Now we're in the office of the North Fontana Concerned Citizens Committee, and have I got the name right. And was that started by your mom? Was that that first? No, no okay.

**Ellen Turner** [01:03:53] No, we did not have office. It was in our house.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:03:59] It was in your house? Was the same organization.

**Ellen Turner** [01:04:02] The same organization. So they always met at our house.

**Arah Parker** [01:04:06] Yeah.

**Ellen Turner** [01:04:07] Yeah, I was at our house, so. Yeah, yeah. This is something that I started. Yeah. Because we still have our, I still have members of the organization and we decided after 50 some years we should have an office, you know.

**Marcille Christian** [01:04:23] You have worked for it.

**Ellen Turner** [01:04:25] Our 48th year. We say, wait a minute. We were doing this for 48 years, and we still doing it from home. You know. I think we had the Jessie Turner Center by now, but, you know, we still didn't have our own thing. So we just decided that we needed to go ahead.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:04:42] And that makes sense. So how did the recreation center get built? Right. That seems like one of the big things that happened.

**Frederick Christian** [01:04:50] Back up and talk about the project.

**Ellen Turner** [01:04:52] Well, first one was build because. We could not, my mother realized that in Fontana we could not we as black people could not go to Miller Park and go get in the pool and go swimming and all of that.

**Frederick Christian** [01:05:07] Well, wait a minute now. We could go, but we couldn't. We could go. But sometimes you ran into problems. Okay. I remember swimming in Miller Park,

and I remember a few things were said to me while I was in Miller Park. But you can only say so much to me at that time because of who I was. We could swim there, but we knew that we might have problems there.

**Ellen Turner** [01:05:36] But we couldn't go in when you wanted to. We had certain days, we had to go swimming there.

**Frederick Christian** [01:05:41] Okay, I don't remember that. I just remember when I wanted to go swimming. I've got a pool and nobody stopped me.

**Marcille Christian** [01:05:50] I don't remember certain days either.

**Ellen Turner** [01:05:52] The community center in North Fontana. So that we have, you know, have a pool and her and her dream was to have a have a lagoon. And so I have run around having a pool instead of a lagoon and and a, you know, the community center. But the reason I put that up there is because John Johnson was a, was a, uh, a urban developer, \ and he was somebody who was from the community, from North Fontana, also grew up at the Community Baptist Church. You know, in a way. And so he actually designed the first. The first Jessie Turner Center North Fontana Community it wasn't called Jessie Turner center. It was called North Fontana Community Center. He designed Fontana Community Center in fact my mother told him what her idea was what she liked so he designed it she did the work as far as the paper well the contact with HUD and write the grant and.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:06:47] You get the funding.

**Ellen Turner** [01:06:49] And get the funding for the for the community center. And so that's why I put that up there. This is sort of give homage to him because he he had the knowledge .

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:06:59] Yeah.

**Ellen Turner** [01:07:00] It takes a village, you know, it was.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:07:03] And so now I know a new center has been built, but is that original center still there?

**Ellen Turner** [01:07:07] No, they tore down the original site and the original is now a Home Depot in. And that's kind of that's kind of another story. That's another story because the land that that and I have some document information for you. Um, that also that land where it was built my mother late found out probably through john because she was doing urban development that that land had actually been donated in 1940. Yeah, I'm tell a lie now, '46. But I think I had the paperwork over there by a lady for black people in the community for for youth to have a community center.

**Frederick Christian** [01:07:50] And this was county based at the time.

**Ellen Turner** [01:07:51] It was in the county, in county. And so, um, and at that time they were supposed to have a groundbreaking was going to build a Center and they had a three or four day barbecue celebration thing to do. you know.

**Frederick Christian** [01:08:05] About the only thing was built at that time was the baseball fields. So we went out there to play baseball, but there was no building.

**Ellen Turner** [01:08:14] So yes. And there was already donated had not been used. So

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:08:19] Since the late 40s.

**Ellen Turner** [01:08:20] Since the late 1940s. yes. So well HUD of course, said that. Okay, you've got the land already. you know, write the grants for this. And we already has designed how this is going to be built. How it was going to look and so of course, you know, it was done they finally got it done. But, um, and so that land was never supposed to be sold because he did have a deed that was part of the agreement but when we became a part of the city of Fontana. They had written a letter whenever she was on her deathbed in Los Angeles. Then they started negotiating to, you know, to tear it down and build commercial buildings there. But yes, they did build another one. Yes, they did build another one. And we did. But we didn't want it. We fought that. We fought to try to keep them the original center there where it was, you know.

**Frederick Christian** [01:09:14] And they that build another one was the city of Fontana because as you said, after that area became part of the city itself, then the city just kind of took our land.

**Ellen Turner** [01:09:25] Right. That's right.

**Ellen Turner** [01:09:29] So yeah. So that's a that's that's been a bitter pill. I mean the other building its nice its pretty and everything but that really the people that black people in the community people the one the original center was built for really can't use it it costs too much to use it. I can't use. We want to have the pageant there. It would cost us so much money to have the pagents . That we would not be able to. We had to charge people too much to come to it. to offset the cost of the, you know, use of it.

**Arah Parker** [01:09:57] Because you have to go through the city now.

**Ellen Turner** [01:09:59] Yes. Right. Mhm. Yeah.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:10:02] Yeah. That's a bit of a tragedy.

**Ellen Turner** [01:10:04] Oh yes, yes, it is. We're not happy about that.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:10:06] Now folks can, can go use the facility except for big events for free, you don't have to pay.

**Ellen Turner** [01:10:12] You can use it. Anybody can use it.

**Frederick Christian** [01:10:13] You. You can use it but you have to pay.

**Arah Parker** [01:10:16] You have to pay.

**Frederick Christian** [01:10:18] If you want to just. If you just want to use.

**Arah Parker** [01:10:22] Wedding reception we paid.

**Frederick Christian** [01:10:23] If you just want to use the facility itself, then you pay one fee. If you want to use a facility and have some food or something like that in there is an extra if you want to use the computer room is extra. We want everything but they.

**Ellen Turner** [01:10:37] They don't charge to use the computer room.

**Frederick Christian** [01:10:39] I didn't think we could use it though. I'm not. I mean, yeah, you could an individual can go in there. I'm saying yeah if a group wanted to go in.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:10:46] The old center was more like used by the community.

**Frederick Christian** [01:10:48] It was open.

**Ellen Turner** [01:10:49] Right. Yeah. The old center was for the community we had all our events there we had Christmas party with Mrs. [Dorothy] Grant.

**Frederick Christian** [01:10:54] It was a really nice gym.

**Ellen Turner** [01:10:56] We cooked Thanksgiving dinners. You know there we have dinner for the community and it was for the community. You know, the greatest really in this use, the community use it, was built for. So but now the new center is not you know, it looks pretty. Yeah. And all of that but it's not really was it's not for the community.

**Marcille Christian** [01:11:16] It's not a community.

**Ellen Turner** [01:11:17] It's not for the community originally built for and really where is located now the people who bought those hot new million dollar homes over there think is their community center they part of their clubhouse, you know, or whatever.

**Arah Parker** [01:11:29] Yeah, that's shady trails. You know all that yeah. So now it's in the the is the center of additional housing that's not related to the original intended.

**Marcille Christian** [01:11:40] Community at all.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:11:41] Yeah. And that feels different right?

**Ellen Turner** [01:11:44] It feels different.

**Arah Parker** [01:11:46] Yeah.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:11:47] Yeah. Uh, interesting, that's, that's quite a story.

**Ellen Turner** [01:11:50] So it was really interesting is that there was a time that Black people who had to north of Baseline in, in all the fields and all the you know and tumbleweeds and it was undesirable property. Undesirable area now is the crime area property.

**Marcille Christian** [01:12:05] Yeah they want it.

**Ellen Turner** [01:12:06] You know and now you know, I don't know.

**Frederick Christian** [01:12:10] As soon as the 210 freeway started going through there, there was a lot of people that sold. That is a lot of Black people sold. Because you sell your house, you can make I don't know how many thousands of dollars at the time. And I'm going to move to this area over here as soon as the 210 freeway started to go in. And I guess that must have been about when the original, uh, center was taken down, when the 210 went in.

**Arah Parker** [01:12:40] And it took a while for the 210 to come through there.

**Frederick Christian** [01:12:42] Oh, yeah. But I'm saying they had to buy the property to develop the property.

**Ellen Turner** [01:12:46] That he was talking about. That's when it started to fail.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:12:48] Right.

**Frederick Christian** [01:12:49] Oh yeah.

**Ellen Turner** [01:12:50] The Ferguson's, I forgot about the Ferguson's'. The Ferguson's and the Rankins'.

**Frederick Christian** [01:12:55] Oh yeah.

**Ellen Turner** [01:12:56] The Rankins. And the, you know?

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:12:58] What were those businesses?

**Ellen Turner** [01:13:00] Yeah. Other businesses, people who had other businesses the Ferguson's' had a business on Sierra had a little had a store.

**Frederick Christian** [01:13:07] Had a little store.

**Ellen Turner** [01:13:07] The Rankins had one right there on Baseline.

**Frederick Christian** [01:13:10] That was a gas station we call a gas station filling station, whatever. But we had but there was a couple of barbershops in that area, also a field and.

**Ellen Turner** [01:13:18] The Roundhouse.

**Frederick Christian** [01:13:20] Oh, man.

**Ellen Turner** [01:13:20] We had the Roundhouse, we had the restaurant, you know, and a lot of having a Mr. Ivey owned that property. And Mr. Ivey went back to Las Vegas because two teams was supposed to be coming and that's why he brought the property of the Roundhouse and it took too long coming. So he leased the properties to my mother. She had a culinary arts program there, so kind of a restaurant management culinary arts program there.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:13:53] But when the 210, why did the 210 disrupt those businesses?

**Marcille Christian** [01:13:56] It ran through the community.

**Ellen Turner** [01:13:59] Divided the community. Yeah.

**Marcille Christian** [01:14:00] They split up the community.

**Frederick Christian** [01:14:03] At that time excuse me, just before the 210 was planned and developed and that sort of thing. Basically, it was still a primarily black community. The track of houses where I grew up was still there. People, the families that grew up in that area was still basically there. The area that spread out from there, like a north of highland and all that, if you needed extra space. That's where you would go find Community Baptist Churches is north of high, was north of highland at that point. But that's fine. You could go there and everything was fine. As the 210 is coming through, you literally split. Okay, this half that's north, you can't get down to this half, that's south. This half that's south down here. I think I'm just going to sell my property and move somewhere. So a lot of people did that. And it's.

**Ellen Turner** [01:14:59] Divides the community.

**Frederick Christian** [01:15:00] Yes.

**Ellen Turner** [01:15:00] Because people felt just, you know, well, not connected, even though because the freeway was there before, was Highlands, just called Highlands. You know, cross the highway. But now you had a freeway. You know, now, I don't know if they're trying to compromise or what because now we've got a south Highlands and north Highland.

**Arah Parker** [01:15:18] I didn't know this was part of Highland, too. And then.

**Arah Parker** [01:15:22] South Highland was created to offset that.

**Frederick Christian** [01:15:24] South Highland literally took over the. Was that Los? No Los Cedros was on the bottom. That was Toray. The name of the street was Toray. What is now part of South Highland. South Highland has been extended. But when they did that like this, you have Citrus Avenue exit. That you can cross over. You have Sierra that you can cross over. And the next one is Beech.

**Ellen Turner** [01:15:53] Are you going west?

**Frederick Christian** [01:15:54] Yeah. If you go for Sierra, Citrus, and Beech.

**Arah Parker** [01:15:59] And Beech is a carpool exit or something.

**Frederick Christian** [01:16:00] Yeah, but my point is that there's no way if you live there, you want to go on the north side of Highland. It's not easy to do. I mean, you can do it as long as you've got a car and you can follow traffic signals and all that sort of stuff. Personally, I wouldn't want to walk through there right now.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:16:21] And would folks used to walk?.

**Frederick Christian** [01:16:23] Oh, yes. As I said, Community Baptist Church was north of Highland. The community center that was built was north of Highland.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:16:33] Oh, the community center was of also North Highland.

**Marcille Christian** [01:16:34] Yes.

**Frederick Christian** [01:16:36] Yeah, Many. That was just part of what happened? You walked. You could walk any place, you know. And Highland had a lot of traffic at some points, but it's pretty simple to look right, look left. Nobody coming. Cross Okay. But, uh, yeah, now it's almost impossible. And I wouldn't say impossible. I'd say I wouldn't want to be the one that's walking across there. Of course, there's lots of young, young people that just they do what they do.

**Ellen Turner** [01:17:08] It's Impossible. Because when we have the parade and we want to shut down the street, too, they have to shut down where the 210 is and citrus. And so yeah. And so you have to go can't go across so. So now it just make it impossible to, you know, to, to use that if you live in the track and wanted to come to the parade you can't walk or. No, I mean you can't walk over on Citrus to go to the parade, you know, to go over there. So I made it harder for people to participate.

**Marcille Christian** [01:17:43] You can just live right there.

**Ellen Turner** [01:17:45] And parade that we've always had in North Fontana. Uh the city keeps asking me, why don't we move it to South Fontana, you know, but we don't want to.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:17:59] Hi. Do you need to go through. Okay, come on.

**Frederick Christian** [01:18:05] Okay.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:18:08] We'll just cut this little part.

**Marcille Christian** [01:18:10] Oh, you're ok.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:18:12] We are, set up in the. Middle of, you know. Oh. It's alright. Oh.

**Ellen Turner** [01:18:19] Oh. You can't walk. You can't walk to go to the parade where a lot of time, people would walk down the street to go to the parade, you know, so that has 'cause it does cause a little a problem for us. So, you know, to for people to participate, to play. I mean, I'm trying to get OmniTrans to drive people over there to participate. Another thing that my mother was active in doing was getting the bus the OmniTrans. Well, what was it called, what was it called then? Was it called OmniTrans then?

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:18:51] The bus service?

**Ellen Turner** [01:18:53] It was called OmniTrans. The bus service that come north because the buses would stop at a Baseline in fact our Foothill, you know. So people that wanted to catch the bus to go to work or go anywhere, I'm talking about the city bus, but there was no there was no city busses that was.

**Arah Parker** [01:19:09] We had to lay. We didn't have city bus service for us on Baseline until I was in high school.

**Marcille Christian** [01:19:14] High school.

**Arah Parker** [01:19:14] Yeah that took a while. Yeah. Yeah. So it mainly was on Foothill for.

**Ellen Turner** [01:19:18] Yes. She was on the Commission of Transportation to get the buses to come because people couldn't, you know, you work for EDD. And she would give people jobs and they couldn't get work. So the fact that she was taking people to work. Okay, she became the Uber. You know, she was the uber before the uber. So then anyway because, you know.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:19:41] She was busy trying to take down all these barriers.

**Ellen Turner** [01:19:45] Yes, The very. So that people could get. Yes. It's just.

**Arah Parker** [01:19:48] Well, even for Mrs. Turner. So I've never met Mrs. Turner. She passed away right before my parents got married in 1981. They got married in December of 81. But from my mother. Because you were pregnant with Elise?

**Marcille Christian** [01:20:00] Yeah.

**Arah Parker** [01:20:01] I'm still the youngest. I just this.

**Marcille Christian** [01:20:03] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Arah Parker** [01:20:05] But my mother works for EDD because of Mrs. Turner as well. And I know from what my mom has told me and my grandmother told me, that my mom had, she had worked as a eligibility worker, but she had been out of work for a period of time. She already graduate of her college degree from Cal State San Bernardino and just trying to figure things out. And finally, your mom found out in a roundabout way. When she found out, she told my mom. She goes, "Why didn't she call contact me sooner, you know, as far as I can go to try to get help."

So my mom ended up, you know, interviewing and things like that. And, you know, she still works for EDD to this day. So she started in her. She has a full circle moment. So she started in San Bernardino and downtown on Fifth and Mount View. And then she did work here in Fontana when EDD had an office here in Fontana. Now she and she had a stint in Ontario as well, but she went back. So we have Ms. Turner to thank for the EDD connection.

**Ellen Turner** [01:21:03] I think by that time, by the time my mother created a position within EDD called a job agent.

**Arah Parker** [01:21:11] Oh, that's when they had job service.

**Ellen Turner** [01:21:13] And with the job, except with the job agents jobs were to do was to match the people, people with the job, but actually go to the employer and say, okay, what do I need to um? What does a person need to do in order to qualify to work for your, you know,

to work for you? And so and then and negotiate with her, see that they would even train, you know, but so so people trained to work the, you know, the jobs. And so that's how the job agent thing came about. And then she wanted, my mother wound up training other people to be job agents, but that's when.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:21:50] Well, now back to kind of how your mom ended up at EDD. She was involved in some of the community action groups in the war on poverty here. Right. How did she get involved in that work and what do you remember of what folks were doing here back then with the com. Because I hear there was a lot of activism around the community action groups.

**Ellen Turner** [01:22:11] There's a lot of activism because as a kid, my mother dragged us to every meeting, I have a brother. And so she dragged us to every meeting so we fell asleep on every city council chair or pinch or whatever they had on here or in city council, you know. So, but yeah. So she was getting a job at EDD. That's the first question, right? Okay. She was working. I'm trying to remember what she was doing before she was working for EDD. I think she was working for the railroad at least a job with SP and then she went to work for EDD because her, um, I'm trying to remember 'cause she is involved with where Operation Second Chance with Frances, Frances Grice, and, and with... oh Lord, all or nothing for us to name only.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:23:09] Bonnie Johnson.

**Ellen Turner** [01:23:10] No, not her. Uh oh, man. I can't think of her name anyway, because person change. Frances Grice. Oh, well, I can't think of her name. That's terrible. That's a real big.

**Arah Parker** [01:23:30] It will come back later, it will come back to you.

**Marcille Christian** [01:23:30] Later tonight.

**Ellen Turner** [01:23:30] Yeah, cause she was. I was [unclear]. But, um.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:23:39] Well, just tell us what you did with Frances Grace. And...

**Ellen Turner** [01:23:43] Oh. Operation Second Chance we're trying to get housing and everything, whatever the need was in the community. You know, just being the voice and advocating for that and then going to whatever powers that be. Yeah. You know, to make that happen. You know, and she didn't know she wasn't getting nothing. And so, you know, she would go talk to whoever had to go talk to make it happen. So, that's how, you know. I was raised up around the congressman's kids and the assemblyman's kids because they were sleeping on chairs too.

**Marcille Christian** [01:24:25] You were all drug out.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:24:29] I heard from Lois Carson, but also from reading some of Francis Grice's interview, that those community action group meetings were something to see. Do you ever have any remembrances of them when you were a kid sitting in those meetings?

**Ellen Turner** [01:24:42] Oh there was a whole whole lot to saying.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:24:46] What was going on in those meetings?

**Ellen Turner** [01:24:47] Oh, well, it was a fight. You know, it was always, always arguing and fighting because they had things they had to be done, wanted to get done. And they didn't the powers that be didn't want it to happen. So then, of course. Oh, what is her? I cannot take from her aunt's name for nothing, because the community action group that was on Highland and it was not for us. It's good. Oh, man.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:25:11] Valerie Pope?

**Ellen Turner** [01:25:12] Valerie Pope, thank you, Lord have mercy. Yeah, I said I know. Valerie Pope, yes, you know. So between mama and Valerie Pope, by this time to my. Because of the newspaper and the Fontana Messenger, Daddy Martin, who was Sam, Sam Martin, he wanted to start a newspaper. He was working for Norton Air Force Base. He wanted to start a newspaper. So. But he couldn't get a paper printed. So because we had a offset printing press, we print the paper at our house, the American newspaper. So and then and then Art Townsend.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:26:00] So you guys printed the Precinct reporter and the American news.

**Ellen Turner** [01:26:04] My mother was on their board to help start the paper. Yeah she was on the board. So anyway, we printed the paper, you know, at our apartment, at our, in our garage. And this course is doing to two different time when the Precedent Reporter started was with different time than when the American newspapers started. And then, of course, from that, from the American newspaper. At that time Cheryl Brown was going to school at Valley, not Valley, but San Bernardino Cal State and it was doing it. And the students on campus had it to talk to their professor about what was going on. And, and so he wrote a little paper called The Black Voice, and the paper was the insert in the newspaper. So Cheryl started working at the newspaper and social stuff in the paper, you know, The Black Voice was in there. Anyway, then with that in mind, you gave a portion of the building so she could actually because you want to start our own little paper for the campus. And so that's how the Black Voice started.

**Ellen Turner** [01:27:11] So now we're printing out of the papers. we just until, we found out that we could actually get. Mr. Bittner, Bill Bittner, this white man in the Fontana. He told my mother that he had printed her. And it was just, you know, you can take your picture, you can print this paper in Riverside. And so he had to take the paper to Riverside be printed. Mama couldn't take the paper. Oh, yeah. So he would take the paper over the Riverside and we had paper printed over there. Yeah. And so then. So then all the papers had the same information on it. It was just the front page was changed, you know if it was American. Yeah. Because in different areas. Well so that's how they decide how to do that that way. Because he had to take the paper to Riverside in order to get it done and get it done faster. Because at that time, because it was a offset printing press, I had to do all the typesetting. So I had to typeset all the every page, you know, for the newspapers, you know. And so that got to be real cumbersome. And so anyway, that's all that kind of evolved to Riverside and and that's in fact, I was I was happy she was actually able to get her office in Riverside because it was not too

far from where the place was that they actually print for the paper was originally printed. Yeah, but anyway.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:28:32] Oh that's a great story. I didn't know that. That's awesome.

**Ellen Turner** [01:28:36] Yeah. So yeah, she hasn't, she has a, um, uh, like a museum of the newspapers. Have you gone over there?.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:28:42] I've seen some of them though. I don't think I've seen the Fontana newspaper. But maybe she has a copy of.

**Ellen Turner** [01:28:48] She has. I think she has a copy because Wallace Alan wanted a copy of it one time and I took it over to him and he read his paper and he said he shared it with Cheryl and they was supposed to give it back to me. And I said, okay, who got it?

**Marcille Christian** [01:29:00] Oh, you better find your paper.

**Ellen Turner** [01:29:02] My mother always told me to take the newspaper to the to the library. And so that the Library of Congress would always have a copy so the Library of Congress does have copies of the papers. Yeah. Okay. Yeah, I was. But, but anyway, um, so that's how those papers started. We're going to the meetings was always about for us. And so what happened is that Daddy Martin, Art Townsend, mom now are coming to the meetings together, Francis Grace, you know, and everybody's comes. And now we have more people singing the same song.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:29:37] Yeah.

**Ellen Turner** [01:29:38] And so that kind of made it better because it wasn't just my mother.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:29:43] You know, she had a community. Everyone was connected together.

**Ellen Turner** [01:29:45] Everyone was newspaper people.

**Arah Parker** [01:29:48] Yeah. Yeah.

**Ellen Turner** [01:29:51] So that helped along with that, um, it was a lot of things going on. Yeah, so many things. I mean, I, I remember having to sit in on the, on the courthouse steps in San Bernardino County because we wanted to have a Head Start program in Fontana and they was not going to let us have Headstart program in Fontana just because they just didn't want to let us have a Head Start program in Fontana. They didn't think like Black kids supposed to go to Head Start and so yeah, so we had to sit in. And Dick Gregory came and got us, came out and sat in with us, you know, at that time. Yeah, it was great came and that's, that's what, that's what we had that drink, that, um, Bahama the shake, you know, for nutrition. Yeah. And that's what you brought it, because we stayed out there, like 5 days for the week with the sheriff stepping over us.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:30:47] Well at the county courthouse in San Bernardino. So the old quarter in Fontana.

**Ellen Turner** [01:30:51] Before the Head Start in Fontana because we were in the county.

**Arah Parker** [01:30:53] Right. Right.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:30:54] Where the center was here. Mm. Yeah. I had never heard about that.

**Ellen Turner** [01:30:59]

[Crosstalk unclear]

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:31:10] Do you remember any other like that, that kind of stand out in your memory?

**Ellen Turner** [01:31:15] Oh yeah! In the time with the Black Panthers, you know, with the, with the, with the, uh, the Ku Klux Klan coming and harassing and all of that. When one of the houses my mother had was on Los Cedros and later in life. Actually I brought to her, on of the houses. Because the house she had was on there on Almeria and Los Cedros dead into my house on Los Cedros. And so I bought that house. But anyway, uh, the Ku Klux Klan and Hells Angels was good too for us. But anyway, uh, the, the, um, the Black Panthers, you know, came and helped secure the entrance of the track because it only had two ways in. I mean, you had one on Citrus.

**Frederick Christian** [01:32:04] Yes. Los Cedros and Citrus.

**Ellen Turner** [01:32:07] And the.

**Ellen Turner** [01:32:07] Other was on.

**Frederick Christian** [01:32:08] Highland.

**Ellen Turner** [01:32:09] Was it a Tokay. No?

**Frederick Christian** [01:32:12] I don't know what that little short street was. Well, but she's right. I mean, it was there was two main entrances.

**Ellen Turner** [01:32:19] One if they wanted to hang us up in there they could hang us up in there. So my house was on the end of the block and you could see all the way down the street. So they camped out in my house, posted up in my house.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:32:30] The Black Panthers?

**Ellen Turner** [01:32:31] So they can see who was coming back to secure the area. So my mom was involved with that, you know, and then within the oh man, it was just so many things. And every time I turned around, my mother said, you know, I'm going to send you to Los Angeles and stay with your dad because, you know.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:32:52] So this is in that sort of like between '66 and '69 sort of around them.

**Ellen Turner** [01:32:59] Yes. Yeah. Because I graduated in 70, but I, I graduated actually in 69 but graduated midterm because my mother got me, got me out. In fact, she took me out of school for a while from Fontana to go to school in San Bernardino, and we just went to Berdoo for a while just to protect us, you know, because we didn't have more black people over there in high school. And so she just took me over there and I went to school with at 17 in high school for a while. And in fact, I stayed with the Martins up there during that time, you know, so.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:33:37] Because things were so tense here and so you guys were around teenagers at the same time, but you didn't even were you aware how tense things were? Or not so much?

**Frederick Christian** [01:33:48] Yes and no. I know I was at least a little aware. Like I said, I can document that from 65 through to 70, that there was definitely a race riot at Fontana High school, at least one, every year. Okay. So we in the black community knew that there were problems. We knew that they were racial issues all the time. So there's certain things you just didn't want to do because if you're by yourself, it wouldn't be safe. There's other things that you just went ahead and did because you needed to go down and use a library to finish up this report for school. And you might have to take a chance sometimes. However, so far is what she's talking about and sitting out on the courthouse and all that. No, I didn't know about any of that.

**Arah Parker** [01:34:43] Yeah. I think it might have been different for you as the mom, too.

**Marcille Christian** [01:34:47] Yeah, right.

[Crosstalk unclear]

**Marcille Christian** [01:34:50] Yeah and, I was kind of like the nerd I played in orchestras and stuff and left went to Chapman for college.

**Arah Parker** [01:35:00] So where we live, my, my grandpa's, the things were a little bit different. It was a little more quieter for them. So especially for my mother, when they were in high school, she was an orchestra, played violin, and my mom was in band. With your older brother?

**Frederick Christian** [01:35:13] Yes.

**Arah Parker** [01:35:14] And I think my mom, she told me that she was the only black female student in marching band at that time. So their time was spent a little bit differently. Yeah. Yeah.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:35:25] Well, and also only a few people were involved in the real political organizing time that then let you see that stuff happening.

**Ellen Turner** [01:35:33] Do you remember something as a kid getting hung on Baseline?

**Arah Parker** [01:35:38] Oh.

**Marcille Christian** [01:35:39] No, no.

**Ellen Turner** [01:35:41] No? Oh, you have somebody getting shot off the poll on Baseline.

**Arah Parker** [01:35:45] I have never heard that.

**Ellen Turner** [01:35:46] Because you said.

**Frederick Christian** [01:35:47] You mean the lineman that was up there.

**Marcille Christian** [01:35:52] Oh I kind of remember that one .

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:35:53] 1980, right? Yeah.

**Marcille Christian** [01:35:55] Yeah. But see, by then you were gone. I was gone because god, after I graduated, I basically had almost full scholarship. And I left Chapman, what mid-'75 went into pre-med. Then we got married '75. Bought the house then must have been '77 because Jason was a baby i think that was our oldest in October '77 probably we moved in.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:36:31] And so I know of the story of the lineman but I had never heard a story of somebody being hung. what's that story when did that happen.

**Ellen Turner** [01:36:41] It was a kid. a little kid. and it wasn't too far from Tamarind.

**Marcille Christian** [01:36:48] So it was closer to you?

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:36:49] Do you know what year it was?

**Ellen Turner** [01:36:50] It was closer to you.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:36:51] What year was?

**Ellen Turner** [01:36:52] Man! I can't remember what year that was.

**Arah Parker** [01:36:53] I've never heard that.

**Ellen Turner** [01:36:54] I can not remember.

**Arah Parker** [01:36:57] Was this before? Like before them, being?

**Ellen Turner** [01:37:00] No!

**Marcille Christian** [01:37:00] Oh, oh wow. Oh.

**Frederick Christian** [01:37:02] In the '60s sometime.

**Marcille Christian** [01:37:02] Yeah. Oh, I've never heard of.

**Ellen Turner** [01:37:05] it was like between '60s and '70s, of course, because I graduated you know.

**Marcille Christian** [01:37:08] Yeah, will you be able to find that in the newspaper. Yeah.

**Arah Parker** [01:37:12] Yeah. Because I never heard my grandparents mentioned there or my great aunt and uncle because I have a, my grandmother, sister and brother in law. They lived on Tamarind on Baseline. Right. Right. Yeah. Yeah. And then the Fowlers were there too. I haven't, I never heard of Grandma mention it though.

**Marcille Christian** [01:37:28] I didn't either.

**Arah Parker** [01:37:29] I never heard...

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:37:31] You think your mom wrote about it in the paper, though?

**Ellen Turner** [01:37:33] Yeah, it was in the paper. It was in the paper. I forgot about the Edgewood being down there.

**Marcille Christian** [01:37:35] Yes, the nightclub.

**Frederick Christian** [01:37:46] Edgewood Lounge.

**Arah Parker** [01:37:47] Lounge? Yeah. So I've heard from my grandparents that I can Tina Turner hit perform there.

**Marcille Christian** [01:37:55] Yeah.

**Arah Parker** [01:37:56] And this is literally on Baseline between.

**Marcille Christian** [01:37:58] Alder and Tamarind and because you could you.

**Arah Parker** [01:38:00] Could hear.

**Marcille Christian** [01:38:01] You can hear it. You could hear it. Um, we could hear, um.

**Ellen Turner** [01:38:04] Lou Rawls was there.

**Ellen Turner** [01:38:05] Yeah. They'd be practicing or setting up for, you know, before.

**Arah Parker** [01:38:09] Yeah.

**Ellen Turner** [01:38:10] And there was a kid.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:38:11] The Blue Blaze before that was that earlier.

**Ellen Turner** [01:38:14] Now the Blue Blaze was on Highland.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:38:15] On highland.

**Ellen Turner** [01:38:17] And that was kind of a more, um, it wasn't as refined as the.

**Ellen Turner** [01:38:25] Yeah because, like a Friday night on for Edgewood, there would be cars lined up on Baseline. They'd be lined up on Baseline to get into the club.

**Ellen Turner** [01:38:38] Oh well he died but his kids are grown. Yeah.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:38:42] Well that's cool. But um. And that was there a long time, the '60s? '70s?

**Arah Parker** [01:38:46] Oh even through until I was growing up.

**Marcille Christian** [01:38:48] Yeah. It was kind of like their forever.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:38:50] Yeah.

**Arah Parker** [01:38:51] Yeah, I remember even as a up until maybe a little bit past my grandfather at the point that he died.

**Ellen Turner** [01:38:57] Did your brother play at the Blue Blaze?

**Frederick Christian** [01:39:00] No. Um, Jerry played at the Roundhouse a couple of times, and Donald played Roundhouse, my older and younger brothers. Okay? My older brother play saxophone. So he was in various local bands. My younger brother just took it to the extreme, like I said, that's what he does.

**Ellen Turner** [01:39:23] At the Blue Blaze, the Hells Angels would hang out there.

**Frederick Christian** [01:39:29] Okay.

**Ellen Turner** [01:39:30] Yeah, they look for us. You know, and they were our saving grace a lot of time because when we had problems in that, in that North Fontana, that north area with the Klu Klux Klan and, and all the things that was going on, there was a guy named Doc who was over the head person where we called for the motorcycle gangs, the head person and then we got the doc and he, he lived on, on Highland too, on the corner in the house where that big house is still on the corner there now that the Rankins, Pierre bought that property on the corner.

**Frederick Christian** [01:40:02] Okay.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:40:02] You know what I'm talking about.

**Frederick Christian** [01:40:03] No, not really. On Highland? No.

**Arah Parker** [01:40:07] Is he related to Uncle John's family?

**Marcille Christian** [01:40:11] I don't know. I didn't know.

[unclear crosstalk]

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:40:22] So the Hells Angels were allies of black folks.

**Frederick Christian** [01:40:26] Well, Hells Angels themselves was organized in the city of San Bernardino.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:40:30] Yeah.

**Frederick Christian** [01:40:32] They were outlaws, so to speak. Therefore, to ally with the blacks was more comfortable with them or for them, I should say, than to, you know, to ally with other whites, because they were, like I said, a little outlaw motor gang. Okay. I remember them being around. I remember never having a problem with them per say. I had the been about maybe 30 years old when I found out, oh, the Hells Angels is an outlaw motorcycle gang and, uh, you don't want to mess with them because of... Well okay like I said, it was not what I grew up knowing. What I grew up knowing was okay, yeah they were over there, yeah they'd ride motorcycles and they do whatever they do. But they never caused me any sort of problems at all. Um.

**Arah Parker** [01:41:29] Yeah. I think across the street from New Hope, the Hells Angels, they had like a house.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:41:36] Right! They do.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:41:38] Yeah. Yeah.

**Frederick Christian** [01:41:39] Yeah, that's their. That is their house. Yeah, that's their headquarters so to speak.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:41:44] Yeah.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:41:44] But actually people also talk about that before that was controlled by the Hells Angels. People talk about that as having been controlled by the KKK in the fifties.

**Arah Parker** [01:41:52] Oh, oh.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:41:53] I don't know if it was the same house, but like right.

**Arah Parker** [01:41:54] Over in that area? So right by. The hospital, okay.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:41:58] So folks talk about a KKK house there and then a Hells Angels house there.

**Arah Parker** [01:42:02] Yeah because I've seen it and it has like this sign.

**Ellen Turner** [01:42:05] It was like the security for the but the early parades because they would ride their bikes through the parade. Everybody loved him to see the the bikes of course. The bikes yeah, with Harleys and making all the noise and stuff, you know, but anyway they were they were yeah, they were kind of a security for the early part.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:42:21] And you mentioned the Black Panthers were, there active Black Panther chapters around here? Were those folks coming from L.A.?

**Frederick Christian** [01:42:31] Riverside. Um, there was. I'm trying to think there were some affiliates at least in San Bernardino, but the larger organization was actually in Riverside at the time. And, uh. Black folks was just helping black folks at that time.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:42:53] I come from the Bay Area and so Oakland where there was a lot of activity. Yeah. I've always kind of wondered if there were more stories about what that might have looked like here.

**Frederick Christian** [01:43:04] You know that. I'm just thinking out loud now, and I hope I don't get myself in too much trouble. But generally speaking, black folks helping black folks, that was very, very common until the gangs came in. And so we're talking about what, mid seventies, mid to late seventies is when the Crips and the Bloods is fighting and this and that. Okay. Prior to that, black folks helping, black folks was normal. Prior to that, the Hispanics and the blacks got along especially well in Fontana because we had a common enemy. So we would have to help each other out, there was no there was no real bad blood at all between the Hispanic races and the black race at that time. But like I say, once the gangs started to come in and proliferate and then they got into the prison gangs and this bad and that's worse.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:44:17] It totally changed things.

**Arah Parker** [01:44:18] And I think even the continued migration of black folks and other people from L.A. coming out here to Fontana, because even for me, going to school, especially high school, there was a lot of classmates of mine that they grew up. They partially grew up out here, but they moved from L.A. to come out here. So this was a totally different, you know, way of life and trying to get acclimated and bringing in what they knew from that point.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:44:42] Yeah. Well, we have been talking for a long time and I want to keep asking questions, but but I feel like we should maybe try to wrap up a little bit. One question we've been trying to ask people to close is you guys have lived through all of these moments of massive change and all these moments, particularly on racial justice protests. Right. You lived through the sixties. You lived through the seventies. Your mom was involved in all of it. You're living through a moment right now where there's been a lot of Black Lives Matter activism again and a lot of sort of the country trying to think about what we're going to do. Um, and so I guess I wonder what it's been like for you guys living through this moment and looking back at the earlier moments that you've also lived through. And what do you, what does it make you think and feel about what's changed? What hasn't changed?

**Ellen Turner** [01:45:32] Well, for me, um, I don't see there has been much change. I'm the president for the Rialto, Fontana NAACP now, which I am responsible for the five cities now in Rialto, Fontana, but also Colton, Bloomington and Rancho. And you know, I have to count my cities, you know, and so some of the same issues that existed then still exist now. It's just looks different, you know, that's all you know, it's still there, but we still try and make it better. Still trying to make a difference, you know?

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:46:14] Yeah. Still struggling. Yeah. You guys, want to say something.

**Frederick Christian** [01:46:19] Well, for me, I became a teacher, so naturally I have to basically be with everybody. And one of the strengths I suppose I should say that I had is I can usually communicate with most people. It had no big thing for me to communicate with someone who had a third grade education or someone who's on the school board who had been a doctor of education. Okay to communicate with those different sorts of parties. Made it simple, but it also may help me to see a lot of what different people wanted. I'll say, yes, things had been loosening up, easing up. And it seems once things started, go in one direction. Then, like I said, the gangs came in, okay? So the gangs calmed down a little bit. And now the political upheaval is it's like nobody is happy with anybody else. Everybody is arguing with someone else. It's just been interesting for me to watch it and I don't feel like I'm in control of very much at all so far as has things changed? Yeah, there has been some changes, but. On the overall. Not what I expected. Okay. I was just. By this time. That's over 50 years ago. By this time, I was expecting things to be nicer or better. So far as the races getting along with each other, and they are.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:48:11] Any last words from you?

**Marcille Christian** [01:48:14] I don't know. I don't know that we've really changed or moved that far since then, because I guess kind of in a way, the things I went through. For us, it wasn't bad as a kid, per say, but then when, our oldest son, was murdered in 95, basically. And what I went through with the Riverside Police Department, if we had known it was you, we would have researched this or investigated this better. I feel that, hey, things haven't changed. You know, people haven't changed. And it's like, why do people keep engraining so much hate in their kids to keep this going on? And sometimes I look at this because our middle child's son, his wife is Hungarian and he's he's out of the country and sometimes looking at stuff now, the way the country is, the way people are acting, I'm like, hey, he's safer. He's safer in Europe, even with Putin doing whatever he's doing than he would be here in the in the U.S., you know, because it's kind of like, how would my grandson even be treated because he's interracial here in the US or in areas. Because even when I left Fontana to go to to Chapman in Orange, it was great on campus because we had world campus a float then, everything was international. It didn't matter. People were just people and you could be yourself. But living in the city was heck because it's kind of like I left the Klu Klux Klan. And then there was, you know, John Birch. Yeah, the John Birch Society was out throwing newspapers twice a week, you know, on the houses between the dorms and getting to campus. And it was like if you'd go shopping sometimes in orange, it's like it was like, oh, you must you must go to Chapman, you must go here. So it's kind of like the racial thing. It's kind of everywhere. And sometimes it's it's quieter in areas. So how do you change these people, both black and white, you know, Indian, Mexican everybody? Because there's good and bad on both sides. And it's like, heck, I'm 70 now.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:51:38] What? What changes? What changes the people to where we realize people are just people and should be treated as such? That is the question. Yeah.

**Ellen Turner** [01:51:55] One thing I would like to interject before I went to Fontana high school, I was a student at Fontana in high school. One thing because like most of the things on campus, we were just kids, okay? The problems that we had, the adults had the problems not the not the students. So what I did I started organizing, I organized some people and one

Mexican, one white, one black one Indian, one Asian and started what was called National Cultures Program. And so what I asked the campus, the school to do, the principal, was to close the campus, the auditorium for the week so that we could have, um, we could have assemblies the whole week and each nationality had an opportunity to, to tell or show how they, you know, what their culture was about, not the not the stereotypical thing and, and miss, Mrs. Grant was instrumental in helping because what she did was make sure that we had food for that culture. So whatever culture was that day that that's the food that was served. You know, so, so people have the opportunity to taste other people's food, you know. So, um, and I think that, I know that helped us on campus. You know, because we were able to see each other as people and see our life instead of our differences. And in fact, even to this day, the city of Fontana still does a culture, we call it now Cultures Arts or something. We had just a week, but they changed to Cultures Arts. And ironically, ironically, they have it at the Jesse Turner Center on August 3rd.

**Marcille Christian** [01:53:38] [unclear crosstalk]. I'll have to go.

**Ellen Turner** [01:53:40] You know, so, you know, then the other thing I started was the BSU on campus. I was able to get the charter for the BSU on campus.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:53:46] When was that that you started?

**Ellen Turner** [01:53:48] That was in those years? Well, I graduated.

**Frederick Christian** [01:53:51] That would be '68.

**Ellen Turner** [01:53:53] I left in '69.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:53:55] And so it must have been in '68. Okay.

**Ellen Turner** [01:53:58] Yeah. I was able to get the charter.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:54:02] That's great.

**Ellen Turner** [01:54:04] Because we had the Thespians and different clubs on campus. We had a problem trying to get into those clubs, you know? So and when I found that, I knew there was gonna be an issue. But when I found how we could actually establish a BSU on campus, I was able to get it going.

**Frederick Christian** [01:54:18] But we weren't allowed to call it that. We had to call it the Soul Club.

**Ellen Turner** [01:54:23] Yeah, that's right!

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:54:26] Why weren't you allowed to call it the BSU.

**Frederick Christian** [01:54:29] Because Black Student Union especially, we're talking about '67, '68. This is when you saw photos of, you know, various people with the beret on and shotgun shells crossed like that.

**Marcille Christian** [01:54:45] And Angela.

**Frederick Christian** [01:54:46] And hold on, well, this is before Angela Davis. But I'm saying you had photos. It was in various magazines and newspapers and they would have bandolier of shotgun shells across here. Well, now these guys are radicals. Yeah. You can't call it a Black Student Union because that's what that was the reputation. So we called it Soul Club and we were fine.

[01:55:07] [crosstalk]

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:55:16] You can call it the Soul Club, but it is the Black Student Union.

**Ellen Turner** [01:55:18] This charter is the black student union. It is. Now they call it Brothers and sisters United.

**Frederick Christian** [01:55:23] United.

**Ellen Turner** [01:55:23] Yes, yes. Yes. [crosstalk]

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:55:36] All right. Well, I'm glad that you guys shared that story, because I think BSU started in various cities around that same time. But it's wonderful to know. And what I do remember what the Soul Club or, the BSU did in the first couple of years at Fontana.

**Ellen Turner** [01:55:52] Yeah, I still got pictures. I mean,

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:55:56] Oh, yeah?

**Frederick Christian** [01:55:57] Katie Ward. Yeah, yeah. I remember that one that you had. I guess it was Larry Burns and. Anyway. It was two female, two males, and they were dressed in dashikis onstage. I'm trying to think of of what we actually did. I do remember at least one assembly. I do remember that at the end of the year, there was a beach trip, but I don't remember a whole lot else.

**Ellen Turner** [01:56:33] Having meetings, BSU meetings.

**Frederick Christian** [01:56:34] No doubt.

**Ellen Turner** [01:56:37] That meeting with. Sit and talk about, you know, what's going on, campus and with the community just.

**Marcille Christian** [01:56:47] That's also a good way to connect, too.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:56:48] Share knowledge.

**Arah Parker** [01:56:50] Especially on campus.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:56:51] And build community, I mean just the way folks do now.

**Marcille Christian** [01:56:54] Right.

**Jennifer Tilton** [01:56:55] Mmhmm. Well, thank you so much for sharing stories with us today. I feel like we'll have follow up questions for sure. But this is a good place to start. And so I will stop recording now.

**End of Interview:**  
[01:57:07]